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SUBJECT: LISBON TREATY 'YES' CAMPAIGN RECEIVES TIMELY BOOSTS

REF: DUBLIN 310 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. Summary: With just a week to go before the June 12 referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, the 'Yes' campaign has received a number of timely boosts. Virtually all important political, employer, labor, and farmer organizations in Ireland have now recommended a 'Yes' vote. While there will continue to be considerable rhetoric from the 'No' camp over the next few days, it's hard to see how the Lisbon Treaty referendum can now be defeated. End summary.

¶2. On June 3, The Irish Farmers Association (IFA) announced they were urging their 85,000 members and their families to vote in favor of the treaty. The decision of the IFA to call for a 'Yes' vote, according to IFA President Padraig Walshe, came after Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Brian Cowen gave a commitment that GOI would veto EU agreement to the current WTO talks if the deal does satisfactorily protect Irish interests in the agriculture sector. The IFA have said that without that commitment from Cowen, they would have recommended a 'No' vote. (Note: Cowen subsequently declared that there has been no change in the Government's position, reiterating that the Government of Ireland will not sign on to a WTO deal that is unacceptable to Irish farmers. End note.) On June 1, the smaller farming organization the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers' Association (ICMSA) backed the Treaty after Cowen gave an assurance that the Government would not accept a WTO deal that was "unbalanced."

¶3. In a separate development on June 4, the Referendum Commission (an independent body with a mandate to explain the referendum proposals, promote public awareness of the referendum, and encourage the electorate to vote at the poll) clarified a number of aspects of the Lisbon Treaty, which it says have led to confusion among the public. The Commission reiterated the Government's view that Ireland would retain a veto on any future WTO deal. The Commission also clarified how qualified majority voting would work under the Treaty, areas in which the EU can act, and changes from unanimity to qualified majority voting. It stated that the Treaty would not affect Ireland's constitutional position on abortion.

¶4. On June 4, in a show of unity, the three main political parties in the Irish Parliament came together in a joint press conference to emphasize the importance of a 'Yes' vote on the Lisbon Treaty. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheal Martin (who heads the Fianna Fail campaign), Fine Gael campaign director and Dublin MEP Gay Mitchell, and Labour Party director of elections Joe Costello urged the electorate to vote in favor of the Treaty. The political leaders committed their parties to a coordinated campaign effort in order to maximize their effectiveness and ensure the largest possible 'Yes' turnout on election day, June 12.

¶5. Comment: All verdicts have been rendered, except that of the voters. Virtually every important national political party, employers' group, labor union, and farmers' association has recommended a 'Yes' vote. While there will continue to be considerable rhetoric from the 'No' camp over the next few days, it's hard to see how the Lisbon Treaty referendum can now be defeated.

FAUCHER